

CULTURES OF SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

Hilary Term 2016/2017

Croatian lecturer: Sanja Franković

1. Slavic Mythology and Its Traces in Croatian areas

The traces of Slavic mythology are still present in the landscapes of Slavic countries. Croatian ethnologist Vitomir Belaj explains how the abandoned approach of Czech historian Jan Peisker was partly used in the explanation of Slavic mythology traces in toponymy. Peisker found thirty two examples of equally arranged pagan sacred sites on the western Slavic area. According to his opinion, such a site has liquid water. On the right, downstream, there is a rock whose name once reminded of the devil, fear, darkness, hell, black colour and black horse. On the left, there is a higher mountain top whose name reminded of the Slavic gods Svarog and Svantevid, sun, sky, white colour and white horse or mare. Peisker explained this regular phenomenon as a trace of sanctuary of Iranian Zoroastrian dualistic religion in which good, white god of light Ahura Mazda was worshiped on the left bank of the river and Deva, evil, black god of darkness, was worshiped on the right bank. In the process of Christianization, the evil god was identified with the devil. The places of former Slavic sanctuaries were occupied by churches dedicated to Christian saints. On the left side, the church of St. Vid was situated (as evocation of vision and light), and the church of St. George or St. Michael (who both killed the Dragon or Snake) was on the right side. Although Peisker's theory of *cult stages* as signs of Iranian dualism was rejected, a new explanation of toponymy appeared. Philologists Vyacheslav Vsevolodovich Ivanov and Vladimir Nikolaevich Toporov reconstructed the fragments of mythical texts of Slavic paganism in which the battle of Order and Disorder was shown. Indo-European Thunderer chased the Snake (the symbol of Disorder) from the top of the tree that represented the world. Snake's place was at the bottom of the water. The conflict between the principles of good and evil assumed some high ground which got the features of the sacred space.

Croatian philologist Radoslav Katičić recognized the examples of such *stages* in Croatian area. The names like *Perun*, *Perunsko*, *Vidova gora* remind us of Perun Thunderer or Vid, by whom Perun was replaced, and toponym *Volosko* reminds of god Veles, Perun's rival from the water world. In mythological thinking, the existence of human world depended on the battle between Order and Disorder. However, it was not conditioned by its outcome, but eternal tension between the upper and lower world. That dynamism was considered as a cause of seasons' change. According to Andrej Pleterski, some places of the eastern Alps also have traces of reconstructed mythical story on Slavic gods. Three points appeared in the landscape to form a triangle. They represented Perun on the top, his rival Veles or son Jarylo/Juraj on the lower position, and Perun's wife near water. Between the points of Veles and a goddess (Great Mother Earth, Mokoš), water was the boundary between the worlds of alive and dead. Every year Veles would take away Perun's wife and she lived with him in the lower world until spring, when Perun would recapture her. That spacial points were used by people to tell the mythical story on relationships between Slavic gods.

The lecture will describe the examples of so called saint triangles in Croatian areas, show their position on the map and provide photographs.

2. Croatian Triliteracy in the Middle Ages

The lecture is dedicated to three alphabets of Croatian culture in the Middle Ages. The widest social framework was Latin, but Croatian literacy in the Glagolitic alphabet was also included by the end of the 9th century. The beginning of its predominance was announced by

Slavic literacy of Salonika brothers Cyril and Methodius, when the part of Methodius disciples found shelter in Croatia after his death in 885. The expansion of the Glagolitic alphabet from the Moravian-Pannonian region was extinguished and the Glagolitic alphabet started to expand from Bulgaria and Macedonia to the northwestern and eastern Adriatic coast. The Cyrillic alphabet was created in Bulgaria by the end of the 9th century. Until the 12th century, it was expanding to the Croatian lands together with the Glagolitic alphabet and it was coming alone from the 13th century. It reached the central part of the eastern Adriatic coast. The Croatian type of the Cyrillic alphabet, together with that of Duklja, Hum and Bosnia belonged to the western Cyrillic region. In the 14th century, Church Slavonic language was changed under the influence of folk Croatian language, and the twofold Glagolitic and Cyrillic literacy was enriched with the Latin alphabet. The texts in Croatian language started to be recorded in the Latin alphabet, and the first of them originate from the half of the 14th century. Triliteracy joined trilingual Croatian literature (Church Slavonic, Croatian and Latine). That is the unique feature of Croatian culture among all South Slavic literatures.

Croatian society of the Middle Ages was an integral part of the European and Mediterranean Latinism, not only by its use of Latin language in the secular and ecclesiastical life but also in artistic creation. While the Cyrillic alphabet never was only Croatian, the Glagolitic alphabet remained in Croatia for centuries in its special angular variation after it was extinguished in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Bosnia. Croatian Glagolitic priests were keepers of Glagolitic tradition and Slavic liturgical language and literature, holders of religious life, heads of legal affairs in the native language and also engaged popular educators and writers.

The lecture will provide geographical maps and the images of epigraphic monuments, manuscripts and the first Glagolitic and Latin printed books.

3. Croatian Lace-making as Immaterial Heritage

Lace-making exists in Croatia for several centuries and appeared at the same time as in the Mediterranean and Central European countries. Unlike European lace-making, where lace was made by nuns, female citizen or noble women, Croatian lace was made by peasant women who transferred that skill from generation to generation. Firstly it was made as a part of traditional clothes and decoration for furniture and floors or for sale, what was an additional source of income. When industrialization changed the way of life and dressing, lace production was ceased or reduced. Today it is active in three main centres: Pag, Lepoglava and Hvar. Its tradition is still alive thanks to lace-making courses and schools that were active from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century until the time after World War II. The purchase of lace was also organized. Hvar lace is made by Benedictine nuns.

School courses enabled women to get acquainted with technological procedures, materials and patterns. Their handicrafts are not aimed at the village anymore, but civil layers. The real form of lace appeared in Renaissance, when simplicity and whiteness were appreciated. Under the Mediterranean influence, Croatian Adriatic region accepted needle lace-making and continental region accepted bobbin lace-making under the Central European influence. Intensive preoccupation with lace-making lasted in Europe by the end of the 19th century. The stagnation of lace-making was caused by industrialization and new fashion trends. However, the attempts of its renewal last until today. Croatian lace-making was a part of rural production. Technological and visual features remained quite faithful to the original forms. Lepoglava has the tradition of bobbin lace, Pag has needle lace, and Hvar has lace made of agave treads.

The lecture will provide a historical overview of lace production, a description of its forms, and plans of its revitalization as a Croatian tradition and tourist souvenir. As a form of immaterial heritage, lace is included in the list of UNESCO in 2009.

4. The European Context of Nazor's Children's Stories on the Theme of Crossing Over the Worlds

This lecture compares the motifs and themes common to Croatian writer Vladimir Nazor (1876–1949) and European writers from Romanticism to the turn of the 19th to the 20th century (fin de siècle). Nazor's stories are analyzed between themselves with regard to the crossing over from one world to another (land into the sea world, human into the animal/forest world, immortal into the human world). Then, each story is compared with the corresponding stories of the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and Oscar Wilde. Similarities and differences in the presentation of the particular motifs, characters, and situations are established. The features of modern style in the description of the characters, plant, animal, and mineral world and Neo-Romantic longing for the contents from the folklore heritage and fairy tale antiquity are observed. Nazor was preoccupied with motifs and characters from the fairy tales of the famous European writers, but he approached them in his own way, connecting them with the Croatian maritime climate and the heritage of oral literature and mythology.

Although Modernism celebrated industrialization and urbanization, there was another opinion relating to the fear of alienation between people living in large cities and to the ecological problem of industrial pollution. As a result of such concerns, at the beginning of the 20th century, Neo-Romanticism turned to the past and revived the experience of fairy tales, stories, and legends, as well as common motifs that had been circulating through time and which are an indication of the unchangeable longings of the human soul.

5. The City in Croatian literature

The lecture will be dedicated to urban themes in Croatian literature. August Šenoa (1838 – 1881) was an originator of Zagreb *urban mythology*. The majority of Croatian realist writers had peasant origins. Their stay in the city during education was marked by a lack of adaptability, so they made a literary stereotype of the city as an alienated form of life.

In the period of modernism, Croatian writers were educated at the universities of Vienna and other European cities. The city became a place of cultural consumption and possibilities of artistic individualism. New cult of a coffee-shop as an authentic urban space designed for the enjoyment and creative gathering. Modernism considered the city as a *process and simultaneity of diversity*. The paradigmatic work of the new concept of the city was the short story *Big City* (1902) by Milutin Cihlar Nehajev.

In the avant-garde poetry, due to technical achievements, the city was experienced as fascination, but also as disaster because of environmental pollution and human alienation caused by industrialization. In the interwar period, writers dealt with the problem of class relations, justice and solidarity. The interest in other forms of urban life (salons, petit bourgeois mentality and snobbery) was also present in the works of Milan Begović and Miroslav Krleža.

After the World War II, the city became a constant topic in Croatian literature. The novel *Cyclops* (1965) by Ranko Marinković was the first Croatian real urban novel. In poetry and jeans prose of the 70s the mythology of group and street jargon were emphasized (Majdak). Existential crisis was connected with the environmental crisis and dehumanization of urban landscape (Cvitan).

In the War of Independence, the city lived in human memory (Glavašević). War experience was presented in the documentary form, autobiographical writings and fictional construction with surreal elements. The newest time gives to individual memories of urban life the importance of historical testimony. By placing of events in the multiethnic cities, national and cultural identities are examined. The transitional city suffered radical changes: surviving in the hard market conditions, social disintegration, consumerism and the fall of moral values.